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ABSTRACT

A study tested the precursors to vocational teachers' commitment to teaching as suggested by the commitment model proposed by Pierce and Dunham. Important consequences of commitment were examined by identifying relationships between commitment, behavioral intentions, and resulting turnover. The study examined the entire population of teachers beginning their first year of teaching and those beginning their second to fourth year in the vocational subject matter areas in public secondary institutions in Wisconsin. Study results were generally supportive of the model, although some nonsignificant paths were identified. Path analyses were consistent with the concept that job/role expectations and external job choice factors lead in sequence to commitment propensity and behavioral intent. Self-esteem, locus of control, internal job choice factors, employability, and experienced responsibility were not related to the primary variables of interest. Direct significant paths were from job/role expectations to commitment propensity and commitment. Total effects for expectations showed a pervasive influence through most of the model. Experienced meaningfulness was identified as a significant predictor of commitment to teaching, which was a significant predictor of intent to stay in or leave teaching. Behavioral intent was a statistically significant predictor of actual turnover behavior. (YLB)

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IDENTIFYING DETERMINANTS OF COMMITMENT AND TURNOVER BEHAVIOR

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IDENTIFYING DETERMINANTS OF COMMITMENT AND TURNOVER BEHAVIOR

Introduction

Retention of vocational teachers in the public schools is an issue of increasing concern to teacher educators and administrators and the public in general. Several trends contribute to this problem. First, there is evidence that the intellectual quality of those choosing to enter and remain in teaching is declining (Atkin, 1980). This may lead to a decline in the quality of education they provide. Second, teachers already in the profession feel they have little lateral and upward mobility compared to people in other careers (Lowther & Chapman, 1981). Consequently, some may become dissatisfied and leave the profession. Public school teachers have been the object of increasing criticism in the news media. It seems that the social status and respect once assigned to teachers has diminished. As a result, some of the more intrinsic, non-monetary rewards of teaching have lessened, contributing to less satisfaction and, potentially, less career stability. Because of turnover among these teachers, one wonders: How committed are teachers to teaching? How does commitment influence one's turnover behavior? These and other factors highlight the concern educators express with respect to teacher entry, commitment, and retention.

Over the past two decades, most of the research regarding antecedents and outcomes of commitment have been cross-sectional and static in nature. This makes it difficult to document the development of commitment influenced by proposed antecedents. In addition, many of the studies have been conducted with individuals for whom commitment had already developed. This may decrease the sensitivity of the dynamic aspects of development from the antecedents to commitment to outcomes, particularly turnover (Pierce & Dunham, in press). The design of the study included both a cross-sectional element as well as time orderedness.

A Proposed Model

A framework for studying the development of commitment and its impact on turnover is the model proposed by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1979). Steers (1982), building on previous research, constructed a model illustrating both the antecedents to and outcomes of organizational commitment. The three categories of antecedent variables are personal characteristics, job characteristics, and the nature and quality of an employees' work experience.

Since the Steer's study, Mowday et al. (1982) suggests that to understand the development of commitment, three stages need to be reexamined. The pre-entry stage, early employment period work experiences, and the middle/late career stage.

At the pre-employment stage, individuals enter the profession with varying levels of "propensity to become committed." This is influenced by personal

characteristics, job/role expectations, and circumstances related to one's decision to enter the profession.

During the second stage, or early employment period, it is argued that as one's length of service unfolds, commitment develops due to a variety of work experiences. Such experience includes type of supervision experiences and participation in decision making which lead to one's sense of responsibility and, consequently, to an increase in one's commitment. Also, included in this stage is the notion of job alternative availability. The last stage is the mid-to-late career stage. Mowday et al. (1982) suggest that as one continues in the profession, commitment continues to develop through factors such as social involvement, need for family stability and investments.

Two modifications have been made to the model (see Figure 1). In keeping with a suggestion made by Pierce and Dunham (in press), "experienced meaningfulness" was added to the model for investigation in this study. They argue that initial work experiences may lead to experienced meaningfulness in one's work/role which will enhance commitment. From exchange theory, Steers suggests (1977) that employees who feel that the job/organization is making use of valued skills and abilities are likely to give greater commitment in return.

A second change has been the addition of an arrow postulating a direct effect from job/role expectations to commitment. Various studies (Greenhaus, Seidel & Marinis, 1983; Stumpf & Hartman, 1984) have suggested that expectations not only act prior to career entry in influencing job-related attitude and perspectives, but also are continually examined in light of what one experiences

The primary purpose of this investigation, then, is to test the precursors to one's commitment to teaching as suggested by the modified model. In addition, important consequences of commitment will be examined through identifying relationships between commitment, behavioral intentions, and resulting turnover (or retention). The study will examine subjects through what will be considered the pre-employment and early employment periods.

Study Questions

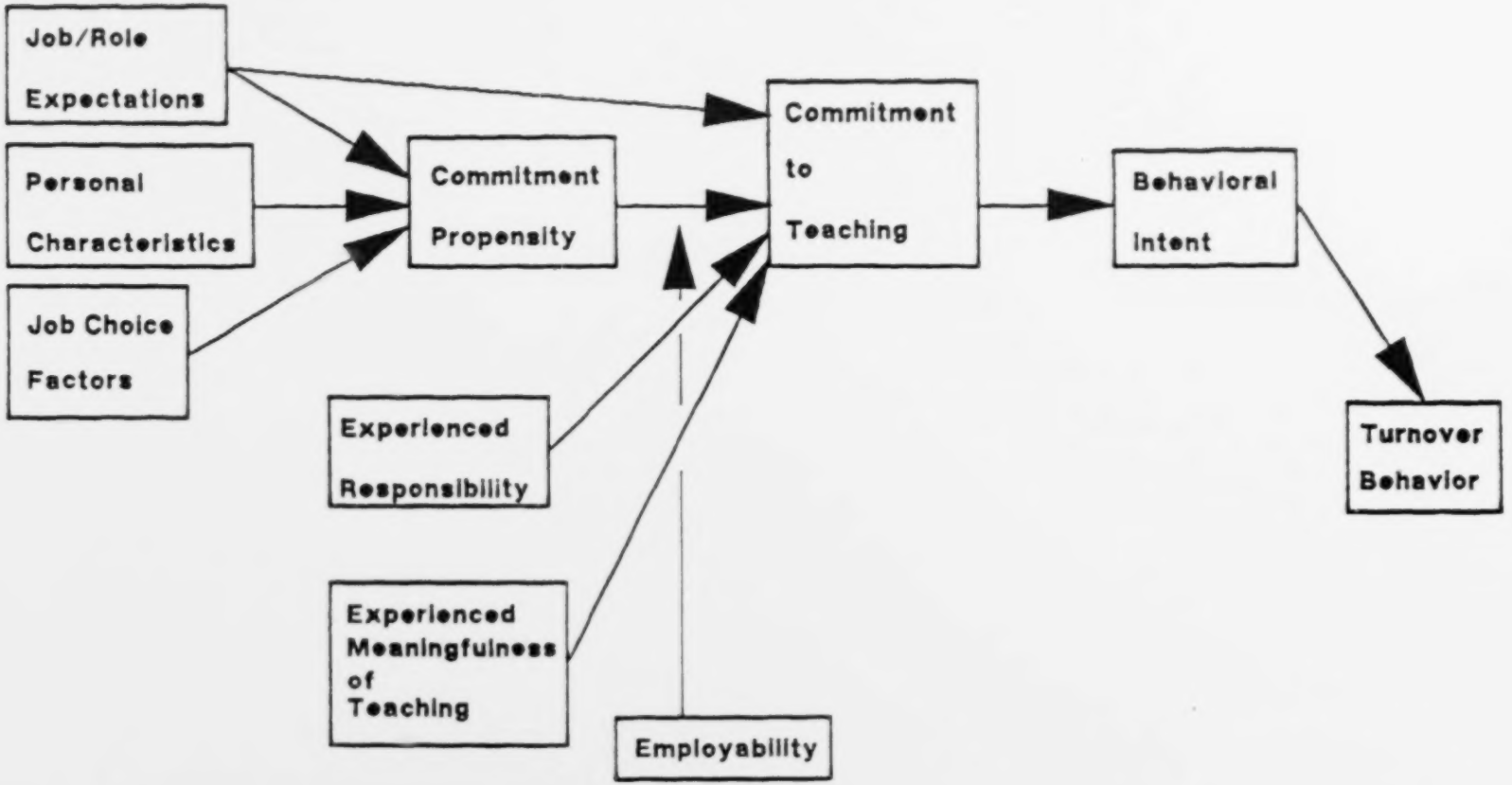
To guide the study, the following questions were asked:

1. Do the underlying theoretical characteristics of the model match the data?
2. To what extent is the causal ordering of the variables in the model consistent with the data?

Method

The entire population of teachers beginning their first year of teaching and those who were beginning their second, third, and fourth year in the vocational subject matter areas in public secondary educational institutions in Wisconsin, was selected for inclusion in the study. The teachers in the various vocational areas were identified through examination of employment records at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. These vocational education areas include home economics education (n=33), vocational

Figure 1: Modified model of antecendents and outcomes of commitment.



agricultural education (n=62), marketing and distributive education (n=20), business and office occupations education (n=88), and industrial education (n=5). The study was conducted immediately prior to and including the 1986-87 school year.

This cross-sectional design was used to determine the influence of various precursors to commitment and turnover behavior for teachers in the first, second, third, and fourth year of teaching. Teachers having up to four years experience were selected for inclusion in this study because it appears that most of those leaving the teaching profession in vocational education will have done so by the end of the fourth year (Thompson, 1968; Knight, 1978). Therefore, investigation of the factors of commitment and its influence on turnover behavior was conducted during the first four critical years of teaching. These first four years were considered as the pre-employment and early employment phase of the proposed model. The pre-employment phase is evident in the measurement of selected constructs for first year teachers just prior to the beginning of the school year.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a mail questionnaire. Data were collected at three different points prior to and during the 1986-1987 school year. An instrument assessing self-esteem, locus of control, years of experience, job/role expectations, job choice factors, and commitment propensity was sent out in August, 1986 to all teachers in the sample. A second instrument assessing experienced commitment, employability, experienced responsibility, experienced meaningfulness of the career, and behavioral intentions was sent in late March, 1987. The final data collection, sent in early May, 1987, asked the subjects to indicate if they were leaving teaching or not. The total number of complete responses for the study was 148 yielding a 72 percent response rate. Many who responded to the first mailing did not respond to the second. Since it was necessary to have the same individuals respond to all three mailings, those responding to the first mailing but not the second and third were eliminated from the study. This accounts for the lower response rate than might be expected with one mailing.

A non-respondent follow-up and analysis was employed to determine if differences existed between respondents and non-respondents. Twenty-five non-respondents were randomly selected and compared to respondents on the following constructs:

1. Job/role expectations
2. Employability
3. Commitment to teaching
4. Intent to leave/stay
5. Experienced meaningfulness of teaching

In addition, proportions of stayers and leavers were calculated and compared. The percent of turnover for the sample was 12%, while the non-respondent proportion (3 out of 25) was 12% as well. Even though a chi square test was not used to examine proportional differences due to low expected values in at least one cell, it seems obvious to conclude that the

proportion of leavers was no different in the sample than in the non-respondent pool. This is important to note because it was a concern that the non-respondents would be primarily those individuals who were leavers. No significant differences were found when comparing the two groups on the selected constructs.

Measures

An extensive battery of instruments was chosen including several existing scales and several items written for this study. The commitment to teaching measure was a modified version of the Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Bowlain's (1974) 15-item instrument. The 9-item construct was congruent with their definition that a committed individual believes in and internalizes the organization's values and goals and is willing to contribute to the well-being of the organization, thereby developing a psychological and behavioral cohesion to the group. The three primary predictor variables were: propensity to commit (e.g. I am inclined to feel a great sense of loyalty to teaching), experienced responsibility (e.g. I feel personally responsible for the work I do while teaching), employability (e.g. right now there are lots of organizations and businesses that I am aware of and I have access to as a possible employee), and experienced meaningfulness (e.g. teaching stirs up real enthusiasm on my part; every time I finish a day's work of teaching, I feel I have accomplished something really worthwhile). Behavioral intentions reflected both absenteeism and turnover intent measures (e.g. thoughts of quitting, search intentions, intent to quit, thinking of absenteeism). These are similar to measures used in Bannister and Griffeth (1986) and Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978). Job/role expectations were examined by asking subjects their present expectations regarding 19 aspects of a job as included in the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967).

Personal characteristics measured in this study included demographic (vocational program area) and personality variables [self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1981) and locus of control (James, 1975)]. Job choice factors assessed the degree to which an individual selected teaching as an occupation because of an intrinsic desire/aspiration or due to extrinsic, constraining factors. Actual turnover was measured by asking a one-item question regarding their actual decision to leave or remain in teaching. This item was coded 1 = stayer, 2 = leaver.

A Likert-type scale (1-Very strongly disagree to 7-Very strongly agree) was used as an indicator of subject response to most of the constructs. A nominal level measure was used to record responses to the demographic variable. A field test was conducted using subjects not in the sample to identify unforeseen problems with the instrument and assess its reliability.

Using SYSTAT (Wilkinson, 1986), a principal components analysis was employed as an index construction technique for each variable. This procedure allows for development of a factor score for each principal component (construct) based on the contribution of each item associated with that component to the total amount of variance explained (Harris, 1985). This yields a more precise index of internal consistency than simple item additive approaches since each item is not assumed to be equally weighted in

calculating a total score for the construct (variable) of interest. In addition, the factor scores are standard scores yielding constructs on the same scale prior to data analysis.

Initially, all variables were assumed to be unidimensional constructs since previous studies had treated them as such. This proved to be true except for "job choice factors" and "employability." The "job choice factors" construct proved to have two orthogonal principal components: (a) external factors (e.g. I made that decision because my family thought that I should take the job, I made that decision because I had no other choice) and (b) internal factors (e.g. I made that decision because I majored in vocational education). The "employability" variable yielded three orthogonal principal components: (1) what I know (job experience, education, job skills), (2) who I am (age, race, sex), and (3) who I know (personality style, social contacts, organization and businesses I have access to). Consequently, these principal components became separate indicators for "job choice factors" and "employability," respectively. The internal consistency coefficient was computed using Cronbach's alpha for weighted items on each construct (Serlin & Kaiser, 1976). Table 1 displays the corresponding coefficient for each construct and the number of items used to measure that construct.

Table 1

Internal Consistency Coefficients and Number of Items for Each Construct

Construct	Number of items	Internal consistency coefficient
Self-esteem	11	.83
Locus of control	6	.82
Employability	9	
What I know	3	.64
Who I am	3	.60
Who I know	3	.39
Job choice factors	6	
External	4	.68
Internal	2	.17
Commitment propensity	9	.83
Experienced commitment	9	.83
Experienced responsibility	4	.78
Experienced meaningfulness	7	.83
Behavioral intentions	4	.83
Job/Role expectations	19	.88

Data Analysis

The two research questions posed will be answered using path analysis. Since the model is recursive, a series of ordinary least squares regression analyses were conducted (Kim & Kohout, 1975; Land, 1969; Michaels & Spector, 1982). The MGLH module from SYSTAT (Wilkinson, 1986) provided the path coefficients for path analysis. Path coefficients will be represented by standardized coefficients.

It should be noted that path analysis is not a procedure for demonstrating causality but is used for examining the tenability of the causal assumptions imposed on a system of relationships. The statistical significance for the path coefficients is based on t-test results being less than or equal to the .05 level of significance.

The coefficient from intent to turnover behavior will be determined using a point-biserial correlation due to the dichotomous nature of the turnover variable. The point-biserial coefficient has a range of ± 1.00. It may also be used in regression equations and its standard error can be determined exactly (Garrett, 1959).

Table 2 indicates the zero-order correlations for each variable included in the study. Each variable has a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one because standardized scores resulting from the principal components analysis index construction technique were used throughout the subsequent analysis. A straightforward interpretation of this matrix is cautioned as coefficients typically change when relevant variables are controlled in regression models.

Table 2

Zero-order Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Turnover														
2. Job/Role expectation	-0.267													
3. Job choice (external)	-0.172	0.223												
4. Job choice (internal)	0.011	0.110	0.000											
5. Self-esteem	-0.097	0.100	0.183	0.109										
6. Locus of control	-0.169	0.126	0.145	0.234	0.381									
7. Commitment propensity	-0.198	0.326	0.267	0.069	0.245	0.216								
8. Responsibility	-0.142	0.320	0.118	0.103	0.114	0.155	0.153							
9. Meaningfulness	-0.270	0.415	0.256	0.103	0.228	0.220	0.382	0.656						
10. Employability (1)	-0.134	0.312	0.389	-0.091	0.097	0.149	0.234	-0.004	0.082					
11. Employability (2)	0.051	0.069	0.002	-0.079	0.192	0.020	-0.120	-0.079	-0.157	0.000				
12. Employability (3)	-0.071	0.223	0.068	-0.057	0.070	0.111	0.010	0.150	0.069	0.000	0.000			
13. Commitment	-0.243	0.358	0.300	-0.083	0.164	0.168	0.339	0.276	0.547	0.275	-0.070	0.140		
14. Intent	0.267	-0.266	-0.292	0.069	-0.110	-0.110	-0.383	-0.101	-0.453	-0.211	0.061	0.060	-0.513	

Examination of the Model

The analysis was conducted by first examining the full complement of antecedent variables and interactions hypothesized to be predictors of each criterion variable. If non-significant paths were identified, the regression analysis was repeated with each criterion regressed only on the significant predictors, thereby reestimating the coefficients for the "trimmed" model (Heise, 1969). The objective was to identify a model of significant predictors that accounted for a portion of criterion variance with minimal multicollinearity among predictors. If multicollinearity was identified by examining the tolerance statistic, the variables in question would either be reentered individually to determine if they made a unique contribution or be combined into one measure (Wilkinson, 1986; Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner and Bent, 1975). No such problems were identified.

In the first analysis commitment propensity was regressed on all the preceding variables as identified in the model. Secondly, commitment to teaching was regressed on all the immediate antecedent variables. It should be noted that employability was hypothesized to moderate the association between commitment propensity, experienced responsibility, and experienced meaningfulness of the job. To accomplish this interaction, terms calculated as the product of employability with these three variables were added to the analysis. A third analysis involved regressing behavioral intention on its precursors as suggested by the model. Finally, turnover was regressed on behavioral intent. At each stage of the analysis, years of experience was included as an interaction term with each predictor variable to determine if this established a differential association to the dependent variable. Interaction between the degree of perceived employability and the other primary variables as suggested by the model was non-significant. Because these interactions were non-significant, it was determined to test for a direct relationship between employability and commitment to teaching even though such a relationship was not hypothesized in the original model. A non-significant relationship was found when the three indicators of employability were placed in the model with the other two significant predictors of commitment, commitment propensity and experienced meaningfulness of the job. Consequently, predictors were placed in the model in linear, additive fashion.

Results from these analyses are found in Table 3. The displayed coefficients are results of final analyses, after "trimming" the models to eliminate non-significant paths. These findings reveal low to moderate coefficients. The statistically significant coefficients are displayed on the model illustrated in Figure 2. The non-significant paths are identified by the absence of arrows indicating no relationship.

Table 4 presents the result of decomposing effects into direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects (Alwin & Hauser, 1975). This presentation indicates the important role expectations play in the model. In terms of total effects, met expectations is a major explanatory variable for commitment propensity, commitment, and intent to quit. This is particularly interesting because it has no direct effect on intent to quit, yet plays a relatively important role in explaining intent, second only to the direct effect, commitment. Also important to note is that external job choice factors have

Table 3

Path Coefficients in the Model

Variables	Commitment propensity	Commitment To teaching	Behavior intention	Turnover behavior
Job/role expectations	.28*	.34*		
Job choice (external)	.21*			
Meaningfulness of teaching		.29**		
Experienced responsibility				
Commitment propensity		.32**		
Commitment to teaching			-.51**	
Behavioral intention				.27**
R^2	.13**	.51**	.26**	.07**

*p < .01

**p < .001

Figure 2: Modified model of antecendents and outcomes of commitment illustrating path coefficients and non-significant paths.

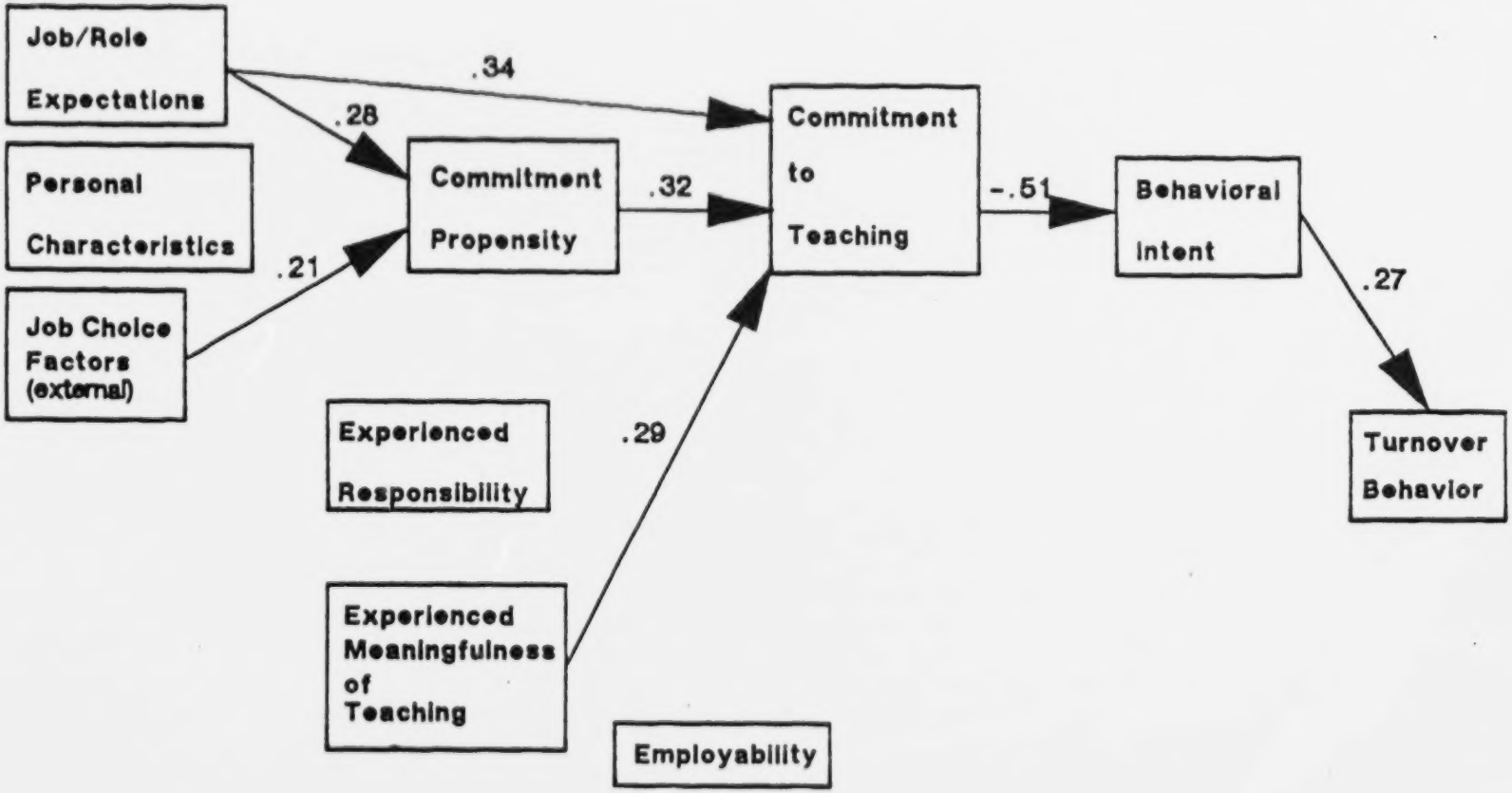


Table 4

Decomposition of Effects

Dependent variable	Antecendent variable	Total effects	Indirect Effects via intervening variables			Direct effects
			X_7	X_{13}	X_{14}	
Commitment propensity (X_7)	X_2	.28				.28
	X_3	.21				.21
Commitment (X_{13})	X_2	.45	.11			.34
	X_3	.07	.07			
	X_7	.32				
	X_9	.29				
Intent to quit (X_{14})	X_2	-.22	-.05	-.17		
	X_3	-.03	-.03			
	X_7	-.16		-.16		
	X_9	-.15		-.15		
	X_{13}	-.51				-.51
Turnover (X_1)	X_2	-.06	-.01	-.05		
	X_3	-.01	-.01			
	X_7	-.04		-.04		
	X_9	-.04	-.04			
	X_{13}	-.14		-.04	-.14	
	X_{14}	.27				.27

little or no effect on any of the endogenous variables, except commitment propensity.

To determine the fit of the model, a comparison was made between the full model and the reduced-form model, as hypothesized, for each regression analysis. Such an examination is conducted by comparing the adequacy of the variables in the trimmed (reduced form) to the adequacy of the full (general) model which includes all antecedent variables for each successive endogenous variable. A chi square test [X^2 (26, N = 148) = 14.28, $p > .05$] revealed that there was no significant difference between the full and reduced models in their adequacy to explain the variances in the endogenous variables (Kim & Kohout, 1975).

Discussion and Implications

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the major features of the commitment model proposed by Pierce and Dunham (in press). An additional variable, experienced meaningfulness of the job, was placed in the model. The results of the study were generally supportive of the model, although some non-significant paths were identified.

The analyses were consistent with the concept that job/role expectations and external job choice factors lead in sequence to commitment propensity and behavioral intent. Also leading to commitment is the meaningfulness of the job. Self-esteem, locus of control, internal job choice factors, employability, and experienced responsibility were not related to the primary variables of interest in this study. Likewise, the interaction of employability with other primary variables was not significant in predicting commitment. The failure of employability to act as a moderator is consistent with previous findings (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978; Miller, Katerburg, & Hulin, 1979). Other studies (Martin, 1979; Martin & Hunt, 1980) suggest that the employability must operate in the presence of dissatisfaction (moderating variable) before it influences intent to leave. It seems appropriate to include both in future studies of this nature.

There were direct significant paths from job/role expectations to commitment propensity (.28) and commitment (.34). Total effects for expectations show its prevasive influence through the most of the model, including its indirect effect on intent to leave. This suggests that expectations play a role in developing commitment through propensity as well as through judgments regarding expectations after entering a career that directly influences commitment. Confirmed expectations seem to play a more important role in the development of commitment than speculative expectations prior to entrance when no experiential basis for confirming them is available. From the direction of the sign of the coefficients, as met expectations about the job increase, then commitment increases as well. In this study, the assumption was made that measures of job/role expectations captured the degree to which individuals' expectations were met. Two concerns could be raised here. First, Locke (1976) proposes that unmet expectations may simply produce surprise. The determinant factor as to whether this produces a positive or negative effect on job attitudes is the attainment of what an individual values from a career not necessarily the confirmation of expectations alone. Greater knowledge about teaching as a career is likely to

result in expectations that are more consistent with what one subsequently experiences. Through such a dissonance reduction, one is more likely to be committed to his/her career choice. Second, note that expectations were measured as to the degree of expectation regarding certain intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of teaching at a point in time. The notion that present expectations are a function of previous experience (Blalock, 1982) was not assessed. Present expectations were assumed to be reflections of one's judgment at a point in time taking into account past experience. To obtain a fuller understanding of this possibility, patterning or consistency of past levels of expectancy as well as present level may warrant study. For example, if all previous levels of expectations were the same, a measure of present expectations may represent the entire concept reasonably well (Blalock, 1982).

Experienced meaningfulness, as suggested by Pierce and Dunham (in press), was identified as a significant predictor of commitment to teaching. Developmentally, then, the derivation of meaning from a career leads one to become committed to it. This is consistent with the definition of commitment used in this study emphasizing goal and value orientation as an important dimension. It seems difficult to disassociate experienced meaningfulness from what one values and hopes to achieve in a career. Closer examination of the relationships among expectations, meaningfulness, and commitment should be pursued.

Experience levels had no differential association with any endogenous variable in the primary analyses of the model. All of the teachers, regardless of the amount of teaching experience, seem to be engaged in a similar process of adjustment and exploration of teaching as a career. This was determined through including interaction terms of years of experience by other important antecedent variables in each primary regression analysis. This study did not, however, examine differential relationships due to within-year differences between stayers and leavers. This was inappropriate due to the relatively small number of leavers associated with each year of experience. However, this examination could yield valuable information regarding levels of expectation, commitment, intent to leave, etc. for stayers and leavers at selected points throughout a given year of experience. Such unique perspectives are lost in an overall examination of a model using cross-sectional data. This should be explored with a larger population yielding a larger number of leavers at each level of experience.

Commitment to teaching was a significant predictor of intent to stay in or leave teaching. The negative coefficient (-.51) indicates that as commitment increases, one's intent to leave decreases. In this study, findings confirm that commitment is at least partially a function of one's propensity to commit (.32), job/role expectations (.34) and one's finding meaning from teaching (.29). This suggests that psychological attachments to a career make separation from it more difficult for an individual. Commitment in this study reflects previous definitions that include three facets: (a) goal and value agreement, (b) behavioral investment, and (c) desire to retain membership. Thus, the stronger one's attachment to a career, given these three facts, the greater reluctance one has to leave (Werbel & Gould, 1984). Two important questions were not examined. It seems critical to look at the decline in commitment over time for leavers. This is strongly correlated with turnover (r=.61) (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983), suggesting that the process of change in

commitment is what distinguishes leavers from stayers. This is especially noteworthy in light of two critical statements by Werbel and Gould (1984). They indicate that commitment in early employees is less likely to be related to staying or leaving than in more tenured employees because, 1) development of psychological attachments takes time, and 2) early commitment is less stable than more developed commitment based on investments and psychological bonds. The formation of such bonds begins in the initiation stage of socialization in which an individual negotiates and defines his/her work role and relationships, the outcomes of which effect intention to stay or leave (Berlew & Hall, 1966). From this discussion it seems appropriate to suggest implementation of teacher support groups, professional and personal "mentoring" of new teachers, and other means of enhancing psychological "bonding" after entry into teaching.

Commitment propensity, as noted, yielded a significant path to commitment (.32) indicating a concern as to how redundant the commitment propensity measure is, relative to the commitment construct. Given that measurement of commitment propensity was conducted for all subjects after entry into teaching (except for first year teachers), does it maintain its purity as a propensity measure? It may if commitment propensity is an inherent psychological tendency that remains stable throughout life and is a permanent characteristic of an individual. It may be likely, however, that one's tendency to commit is also a function of how well one is developing commitment over time. If commitment is growing, then propensity to commit might also increase; if commitment is in decline then one's commitment to propensity may also decline. This scenario would require a change in the model to include a feedback arrow from commitment to commitment propensity, indicating a reciprocal, simultaneous relationship. At some point, then, equilibrium may develop such that the two measures may be redundant, especially if they are measured closely in time. This may not be an appropriate concern in this study since this equilibrium would likely be expected to occur some time after career entry. Further research should be done focusing on the development of propensity to commit as well as the time lag between measurement of propensity and actual commitment. One suggestion would be to conduct a purely longitudinal study with the same cohorts in which propensity to commit could be measured for all subjects prior to career entry.

The finding that behavioral intent is a statistically significant predictor of actual turnover behavior is confirming of most previous research that postulates relationships between affective mechanisms (e.g. commitment) and overt behavioral responses (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Since the time interval between collection of intent data and actual turnover behavior has a significant input on the predicted strength of intentions (Steel & Ovalle, 1984), various data collection time lags ought to be studied for possible erosion of this relationship as the time span grows between data collection of intent and behavior. Moreover, further research should ascertain if intent also constitutes an actual decision to leave.

An unexpected finding was the small significant relationship between external job choice factors and commitment propensity (.21) and its consequent weak indirect effect on commitment (.07). This suggests that while individuals may have entered their career because they feel they had no other choice and were inclined to commit on this basis, their commitment actually

developed as a function of meaningfulness and met expectations, not so much influenced by selection prior to the career. It does raise questions, however, about the nature of commitment. To what degree is it partially a function of a "negative" decision (can't do anything else) rather than a "positive" one (this is what I want to do).

Caution should be exercised in drawing causal conclusions from these data. Although the data certainly support much of the model, causal linkages are not established. Even though the fit of the reduced model as defined by the hypothesized paths was shown to be adequate compared to the full model in each equation, we should recognize that a number of alternative models may also yield predictions that cannot be rejected by the data. To thoroughly examine this model further, one should attempt to specify additional alternatives that are both reasonably plausible theoretically, and compatible with the data. From these models, differential predictions could be derived that would be subject to testing (Namboodiri, N.K., Carter, L. F., & Blalock, H. M. (1975). The intent here has been to offer a tentative yet plausible process model of potentially important variables determining commitment and its outcomes. The degree of consistency between the findings of the present study and the preexisting model upon which the current study is based, lends credence to supporting possible causal chains from individual expectations, through commitment propensity, along with meaningfulness of the job to increased commitment, through intention, and, finally, to turnover/retention behavior. Even though these chains can be suggested, the three linkages account for half or less of the variance in successive dependent variables of each chain. At this point, the low R^2 values in two of the equations in the model raise questions about the fit of the overall model in a practical sense. Inclusion of additional theoretically grounded variables should be explored.

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